

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
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C O N F I D E N T I A L TEHRAN 0389

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS IR
SUBJ: SERIOUS RELIGIOUS DISSIDENCE IN QOM

1. IN MOST SERIOUS INCIDENT OF THIS SORT FOR YEARS, 5
DEMONSTRATORS WERE SHOT DEAD AND 9 INJURED WHEN POLICE
OPENED FIRE ON A CROWD ATTEMPTING TO OCCUPY A POLICE
STATION IN THE HIGHLY RELIGIOUS CITY OF QOM JAN 9.
A POLICE OFFICE AND 3 POLICEMEN WERE INJURED BY THE
DEMONSTRATORS AND ONE 13 YEAR BOY WAS TRAMPLED TO DEATH
IN THE STAMPEDE THAT FOLLOWED THE SHOOTING.

2. INCIDENT OCCURRED ON ANNIVERSARY OF LAND REFORM
LEGISLATION PASSED IN 1963. IT FOLLOWED A MUCH Milder
PROTEST BY STUDENTS OF RELIGION SHOULTING ANTI-NATIONAL
SLOGANS ON JAN 7 THE 42ND ANNIVERSARY OF REZA SHAH'S
DEGREE ABOLISHING THE VEIL FOR WOMEN.

3. ON THE 9TH A MOB OF PROTESTORS ARMED WITH STONES,
IRON BARS, AND WOODEN STAVES REPORTEDLY RAMPAGED THROUGH
THE STREETS SMASHING WINDOWS OF SHOPS AND DESTROYING
PREMISES OF REASTAKHIZ PARTY HEADQUARTERS. THEY THEN
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TRIED TO TAKE OVER A POLICE STATION, DAMAGING POLICE
VEHICLES OUTSIDE. POLICE WARNINGS AND WARNING SHOTS
INTO THE AIR WENT UNHEEDED, AND POLICE THEN FIRED INTO
THE CROWD.

4. INFORMATION ON THIS INCIDENT WAS RELEASED TO THE
PRESS BY PARS NEWS AGENCY AFTERNOON JAN 10. SAME INFORMATION

WAS GIVEN TO DCM BY COURT MINISTER HOVEYDA AT SHAH'S DINNER THAT EVENING FOR VISITING CODE.

5. COMMENT: DEMONSTRATIONS ARE BEING ASCRIBED BY POLICE AUTHORITIES--ACCURATELY WE BELIEVE--TO CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS OPPOSITION ELEMENTS (THOUGH NOT SPECIFICALLY TO FOLLOWERS OF KHOMEINY OR TO ISLAMIC MARXISTS AS SUCH). THIS IS FIRST TIME IN MANY YEARS, IN OUR RECOLLECTIN, THAT POLICE HAVE KILLED SEVERAL DEMONSTRATORS BY FIRING INTO A CROWD. SEVERITY OF THIS INCIDENT WOULD APPEAR TO ARGUE AGAINST THOSE AMONG THE JOURNALISTS AND OTHER OBSERVERS HERE WHO HAVE SUSPECTED MANY RECENT INCIDENTS WERE COOKED UP BY IRANIAN SECURITY FORCES TO IMPRESS THE SHAH AND/OR USG. BY THE SAME TOKEN, IT IS POSSIBLE TO CONCLUDE THAT RELATIVE POLICE LENIENCY, AS FOR EXAMPLE IN LACK OF EFFECTIVE REACTION TO STUDENT DEMONSTRATION JAN 7, ENCOURAGED MORE VIOLENT DEMONSTRATION WHICH NECESSITATED VIOLENT REPRESSION TO PUT DOWN. AT LEAST IT IS CONCEIVABLE THAT THE MANY PROPONENTS OF THE MAILED FIST IN GOI ESTABLISHMENT MIGHT SO ARGUE TO THE SHAH AND PRIMIN AMOUZEGAR IN EFFORT TO REVERSE RELATIVE LIBERALIZATION OF RECENT MONTHS.
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